

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3533

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COMICEDEFOR

S E C R E T REYKJAVIK 0380

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR IC

SUBJECT: ICELANDIC DEFENSE FORCE (IDF) RETENTION ISSUE

REF: STATE 065898

1. SUMMARY: SECSTATE MESSAGE REFTEL VERY HELPFUL IN BUYING MORE TIME. ONLY ARGUMENT THAT IS MAKING FONMIN AGUSTSSON WAVER IN HIS DETERMINATION TO INVOKE ARTICLE VII IS POSSIBLE PREJUDICIAL CONSEQUENCES TO MBFR. HE STILL THINKS DETERIMENTAL EFFECT IS EXAGGERATED BUT NEVERTHELESS IS WILLING CONSIDER MORE ARGUMENTATION ALONG THESE LINES, PROVIDED THIS IS MADE AVAILABLE TO HIM WITHIN NEXT TWO WEEKS. HE CLAIMS LEGALLY AS WELL AS FOR REASONS FOR SAVING HIS OWN POLITICAL CAREER HE MUST INVOKE ARTICLE VII. HE ALSO CONTINUES TO BELIEVE WE ARE OVER- REACTING TO HIS TACTICS AND CLAIMS EVERYTHING WILL COME OUT ALL RIGHT IN LONG RUN. GIVEN AGUSTSSON' S MERCURIAL RECORD THESE PAST FEW MONTHS ON OTHER ISSUES, AND THE GOVT' S CONTINUING PROPENSITY TO CAVE IN ON PRESSURES FROM THE COMMUNIST MINISTERS, USG SHOULD FIND NO COMFORT IN AGUSTSSON' S ASSESSEMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. ADMIRAL BELING AND I CALLED ON FONMIN AGUSTSSON APRIL 10 TO SEEK FURTHER CLARIFICATION ON AGUSTSSON' S INTENTION TO INVOKE ARTICLE VII OF 1951 DEFENSE AGREEMENT. FONMIN CONTRADICTED HIMSELF SEVERAL TIMES DURING CONVERSATION, RATIONALIZING IT WAS HIS INTENTION ALL ALONG TO INVOKE ARTICLE VII.

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A COUPLE OF TIMES HE CLAIMED WORDING OF ARTICLE VII PLUS GOVT' S COMMITMENT TO TAKE IDF ISSUE TO PARLIAMENT MAKES IT

MANDATORY TO INVOKE ARTICLE VII TO SETTLE THE IDF ISSUE. WE RAISED DOUBT ON HIS INTERPRETATION OF ARTICLE VII AND SUGGESTED HE CONSULT HIS LEGAL ADVISOR, HANS ANDERSEN, ON THIS SCORE.

3. INFORMATION THAT HAS COME TO US IN LAST FEW DAYS FROM GENERALLY RELIABLE SOURCES COUPLED WITH AGUSTSSON'S RECENT ATTITUDE MAKES IT ALMOST CERTAIN THAT SCHEME TO INVOKE ARTICLE VII WAS FORMULATED WITHIN PAST TWO WEEKS AT MOST, DESPITE AGUSTSSON'S PROTESTATIONS TO CONTRARY. ALSO IT APPEARS BE PRINCIPALLY POLITICALLY MOTIVATED DESIGNED TO STAVE OFF COLAPSE OF THE GOVT WHICH IS BING THREATENED BY THE COMMUNIST- DOMINATED PEOPLES ALLIANCE (PA) AND TO FORESTALL DEFECTIONS FROM FONMIN'S OWN PROGRESSIVE PARTY (PP). THERE IS ALSO A HINT THAT AGUSTSSON SEES THIS MOVE AS ENHANCING HIS CHANCE OF REPLACING THE PRIME MINISTER AS PARTY LEADER. FONMIN THINKS HE CAN ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES BY INVOKING ARTICLE VII SINCE THE COMMON BOND OF THE PA AND THE DESENCHANTED ELEMENTS OF THE PP IS ANTI- IDF SENTIMENT. AGUSTSSON MAY HONESTLY BELIEVE HE CAN SUCCESSFULLY STEER THE IDF ISSUE THROUGH PARLIAMENT UNDER THIS ARRANGEMENT, BUT WE ARE DOUBTFUL HE HAS THE SKILL TO DO IT.

4. IT WAS BECOMING CLEAR DURING OUR CONVERSATION, ESPECIALLY AFTER PRESENTING AGUSTSSON WITH SECSTATE'S REFTEL MESSAGE, THAT (A) WE CAN PROBABLY DELAY THE INVOCATION OF ARTICLE VII IF WE CAN CONVINCE AGUSTSSON THAT TRIGGERING THE 6- MONTH PROVISION WOULD SEND SUCH PSYCHOLOGICAL SHOCK WAVES THROUGH NATO, ESPECIALLY IN EUROPE, THAT IT WOULD UNDERCUT THE WEST'S CREDIBILITY AND POSTURE AT MBFR NEGOTIATIONS; AND (B) WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO PREVENT HIS INVOKING ARTICLE VII IF WE CAN FIND A FORMULA TO HELP AGUSTSSON CONVINCE ANTI-IDF ELEMENTS THAT HE IS FORCING SOME REDUCTIONS IN US MILITARY PRESENCE IN ICELAND. AGUSTSSON WILL UNDOUBTEDLY CONTINUE TO FIGHT THE IMPLICATION THAT HIS INTENDED ACTION WILL PREJUDICE THE MBFR TALKS, BUT IN OUR JUDGMENT WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO UNDERCUT HIS TACTIC BY APPEALING TO PRO- NATO SENTIMENT IN THE GOVT (SUCH AS REPRESENTED BY HANNIBAL VALDIMARSSON) AND IN FONMIN'S OWN PARTY THROUGH THIS TYPE OF ARGUMENTATION. DURING CONVERSATION AGUSTSSON REMARKED THAT IF MERE FACT GOI
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INVOKES ARTICLE VII CAN WEAKEN NATO'S POSTURE AT MBFR NEGOTIATIONS THEN MBFR IS DOOMED TO FAILURE FROM THE START. HE ALSO REMARKED THAT AT A NATO FONMIN MEETING HE TOLD SYG LUNS HE MIGHT HAVE TO INVOKE ARTICLE VII AND DID NOT RECEIVE ANY NEGATIVE REACTION FROM HIM. (COMMENT: THIS IS WORTH CHECKING.)

5. AGUSTSSON REQUESTED WE ASCERTAIN FROM WASHINGTON THE FOLLOWING: (A) HOW LONG WE FEEL HE MUST DELAY INVOKING ARTICLE

VII SO AS NOT TO PREJUDICE MBFR. WE SUGGESTED THAT TO HONOR THE COMMITMENT HE SAID HE MADE TO PARLIAMENT THAT THE PARLIAMENT WILL MAKE THE ULTIMATE DECISION ON IDF ISSUE, HE COULD WAIT AT LEAST UNTIL CONVENING OF NEXT SESSION OF PARLIAMENT IN OCTOBER 1973. THIS WOULD STILL LEAVE ENOUGH TIME FOR DEBATE BEFORE THE 18- MONTH PERIOD RUNS OUT IF THE OUTCOME OF PARLIAMENTARY ACTION IS TO HAVE IDF LEAVE DURING ELECTORAL LIFE OF GOVT (E. E., BY JUNE 1, 1975). AGUSTSSON STATED HE COULD NOT WAIT THAT LONG AND STILL EXPECT TO SURVIVE POLITICALLY. (B) FURTHER ARGUMENTATION TO PROVE THAT INVOKING ARTICLE VII WOULD WEAKEN NATO' S POSITION AT MBFR IN THE EYES OF THE SOVIETS. HE STILL CLAIMS WE EXAGGERATING. (C) WASHINGTON' S LEGAL INTERPRETATION OF ARTICLE VII (IF WE CARED TO OFFER AN OPINION) AS TO WHETHER HE CAN ASK OFFICIALLY FOR A REPORT FROM NATO' S COUNCIL WITHOUT INVOKING ARTICLE VII AND WHETHER BY INVOK ARTICLE VII TO ASK FOR THIS REPORT HE HAS AUTOMATICALLY TRIGGERED THE SIX- MONTHS NOTICE PROVISION. HE INTENDS TO ASK HIS LEGAL ADVISOR FOR OPINION. (D) WHAT " SUBSTANTIAL" SUBSTITUTION OF ICELANDIC NATIONALS WE ARE PREPARED TO MAKE FOR US MILITARY PERSONNEL IN " MEANINGFUL" AND NOT MENIAL JOBS.

6. FONMIN TOLD US HE WOULD BE MAKING SPEECH IN PARLIAMENT TOMORROW ON STATUS OF HIS IDF RETENTION ISSUE STUDY AND AT THAT TIME HE PLANNED TO SAY HE INTENDS TO ASK NATO COUNCIL TO UNDERTAKE STUDY WITHIN CONTEXT OF ARTICLE VII. AT OUR REQUEST HE AGREED TO DELETE REFERENCE TO ARTICLE VII IF HE DECIDES TO INCLUDE A STATEMENT ON NATO STUDY. IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO SEE IF HIS PA COLLEAGUES CHANGE HIS MIND FOR HIM.

7. ACTION RECOMMENDED: I SUGGEST DEPT REPEAT THIS AND OTHER TELS TO US NATO AND ASK SYG LUNS TO EXPRESS HIS STRONG CONCERN
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SOONEST TO GOI PERMREP ON MBFR ANGLE AND ANY OTHER EXPRESSION OF CONCERN OF DANGER IN INVOKING ARTICLE VII AT THIS TIME. I ALSO SUGGEST DEPT CALL IN AMB KROYER AT HIGH LEVEL NEXT WEEK AND EMPHASIZE OUR CONCERN. IT WOULD BE WORTHWHILE TO POINT OUT THE IRONY OF THE SITUATION, THE CALL FOR MBFR HAVING ORIGINATED IN ICELAND (" REYKJAVIK SIGNAL"), IT HAVING TAKEN 5 YEARS TO BRING THE OTHER SIDE TO THE TABLE, ONLY TO HAVE ICELAND THEN PULL THE RUG OUT FROM UNDER NATO' S CREDIBILITY AT THE BARGAINING TABLE. WASHINGTON TON ANSWERS ARE ALSO REQUESTED SOONEST, IF POSSIBLE BEFORE APRIL 16, FOR ITEMS (A) THROUGH (C) OF PARA 5.
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